

Language issues aired in Edinburgh

The ITI Workshop in Edinburgh was well attended and proved stimulating. **Cate Avery** sums up the varied topics that were on the agenda

My first ever ITI Weekend Workshop was in Canterbury in 1988. It was so stimulating and such fun that it inspired me to join the ITI! Since then, Weekend Workshops have come and gone, and gone too are the days when I had the energy to stay up all night chatting; but the recent Edinburgh Workshop was one of the best I have attended.

The venue was very pleasant, on the leafy campus at Pollock Halls near the centre of Edinburgh – the *pièce de résistance* being the roof-top terrace adjoining the conservatory-style restaurant, where (if we braved the blustery weather) we could look straight out over the impressive crags of Arthur's Seat in one direction and the city in the other. There was a mix of old and new faces among the 70 delegates, and plenty of opportunity to chat and make new contacts during the coffee breaks (isn't that the main reason for attending an ITI event really?). There was also a positive atmosphere, with delegates willing to contribute to discussions and also to listen to one another.

Topics of discussion


So what did we talk about? The speakers were also generally upbeat and varied, from the literary/theoretical (Nelly Chachibaia from the University of Surrey, who made translations of Chekhov surprisingly transparent to non-Russian speakers) and the statistical (Isabella Moore from Comtec Translations – now re-christened Voicepath – who explained how a large translation company keeps abreast of its freelance translators' performance) to



The Weekend Workshop's Highland fling: St Leonard's Hall (top left); EU speakers Rebecca West and Andy Evans on the right-hand side (top right), and the Ceilidh gets into full swing (below left and right)

the nitty-gritty (the European institutions' upcoming calls for tender from Rebecca West and Andy Evans, and contract law for translators and interpreters with interactive exercises from Ellen Moerman). The number of questions posed by delegates showed the high level of interest in these topics. Some snippets of information that emerged: the European Parliament plans to spend E80 million a year on freelance translation by 2007. At present the budget is a mere E20 million, with suppliers including individual freelancers and small and large translation companies. The fact that tenders have to be written in the language that you are planning to translate into means that some bidders fall at the first fence, by demonstrating

that they can't write in that language. And from Ellen: the payment terms laid down by UK law can be overruled by the terms you actually agree with your client. Not surprisingly, payment practices became a topic of lively debate in Ellen's sessions, and Andrew Kirby from the ITI pointed out that the office is now encouraging members to subscribe to a list which deals with this very concern, at http://www.trwenterprises.com/payment_practices.htm.

We were made extremely welcome by the Scottish Network of the ITI, who had planned a lively and informal dinner in a local restaurant on Friday, and dinner and Scottish dancing on Saturday evening. Their hospitality really did us proud. Roll on the next Weekend Workshop! 

Cate Avery, MITI, is a freelance translator working with French and German into English.

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